Student learning experiences as they interact with assessments

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Problem

Theoretical learning does not prepare students to be work ready.

Today, in contrast, employers want fresh graduates whom they don't have to train.

That means students must learn and apply their knowledge at the same time, inside and outside the classroom, all without adding extra months or years to their studies.

Trends in teaching

Need to prepare students for ever-changing business environment which requires:

- Emphasis on skills and learning as opposed to knowledge (Gulikers et al., 2004)
- Embrace and foster diversity (Barber et al., 2015)
- Collaborate and partner with business and community (Barber et al., 2015)
- Prepare student to respond to disruptive innovation

Literature review

- Shift in assessment from tests to complex and comprehensive assessment of knowledge. (Villarroel et al., 2017)
- Authentic assessment replicates tasks and performances typically faced by professionals in the world of work.(Gulikers et al., 2004;Villarroel et al., 2017)

Benefits of authentic assessment are:

- Improves quality and depth of learning.
- Improves autonomy, commitment and motivation for learning.
- Encourages metacognition and self-reflection.
- Can enhance employability.

Literature review

Elements of authentic assessment (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014; Brown & Craig 2004; Villarroel et al., 2017)

- Should be challenging
- Outcome should be a performance or a product
- Transfer of knowledge
- Metacognition
- Accuracy/authenticity
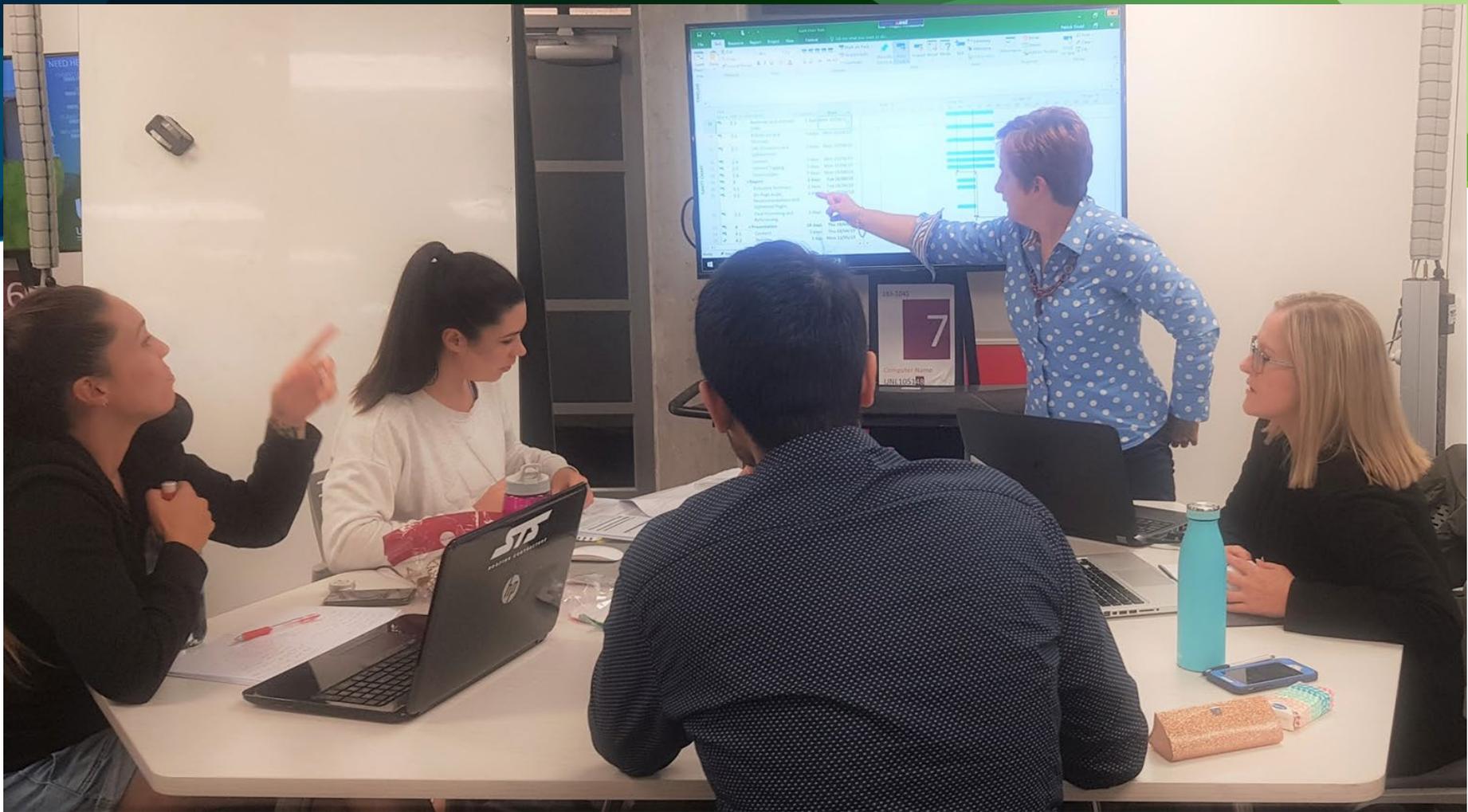- Environment
- Feedback
- Collaboration

Realism

+

Output

+

Judgement

→ Authentic assessment
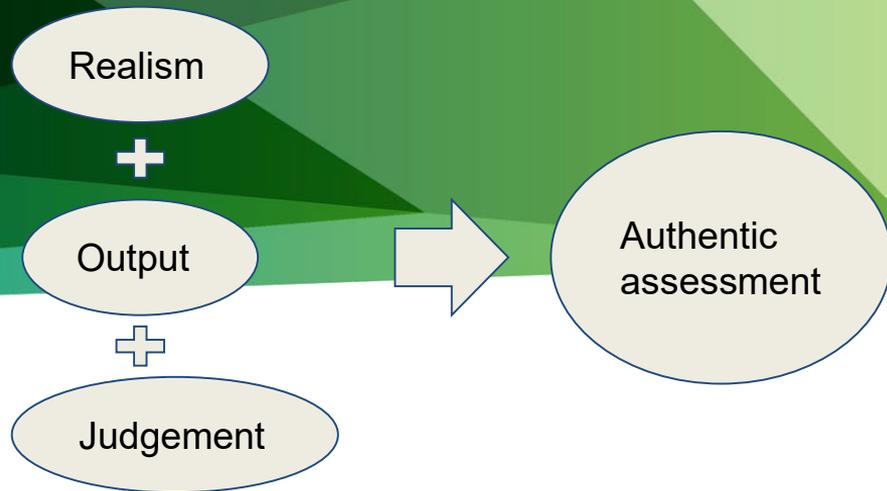
Theoretical model

Realism	The task requires problems contextualised to everyday working life to be solved. This would include higher order thinking skills. The environment in which the task is completed should be authentic as possible in terms of physical and social environment.
Output	The output should be an authentic product or performance.
Judgement	Based on real-life situation criteria that are known to students. Includes self-reflection Includes formative feedback.

Solution we adopted

Authentic assessments and learning

- Work integrated learning
- Project based learning
- Multidisciplinary teams
  - Each disciplinary team assessed on the technical skills required for their respective disciplines

Connecting the Solution to theoretical model

Realism	Everyday working life; preparing project plan, attending meetings and preparing meeting minutes, preparing progress review and communicating it with relevant stakeholders... Physical and social environment, Industry based project in the other classes provide some context
Output	Project plan, project review documents
Judgement	Based on real-life situation criteria that are known to students: students are familiar with student projects and now they are learning to practice professional project management Includes formative feedback: students work on google drive and receive feedback on their drafts as they work on their projects

Research question

How the proposed authentic assessment enhances student learning and engagement?

Methodology - Qualitative research

- Case study research
- Unit of analysis: "the assessment"

This presentation focuses on **project consultancy** assessment where project Management students act as project consultants with students from Marketing, Operations, and Computing for their industry-based projects

Sources of data: Semi-structured interviews with students, focus groups, documents (student's assessments, written communication), was the primary source of information.

Data analysis

We used Nvivo for thematic analysis

Themes were informed by literature review:

- Realism
- Output
- Judgement

We also looked at challenges and areas for improvement

FINDINGS:

Project management student Perspective

Realism	*"If we are going outside and getting a project that's the same thing …(as) in the outside world it's like the Real project."* *"It was a practical experience."* *"We were like talking with each other like a good mate" "That's really good that we got to know new friends"*
Output	*"And they asking me questions ... like what is this Graph? (Gantt chart)... do you like to tell me how to do this or that... I found it interesting because they found that interesting."*
Judgement	*"It was a good learning experience to know how you can handle the team how you can handle the project what can be the risks and how to achieve a target in the project."*

Evaluation of the assessment against the model

Teams Perspective

Realism	*"He helped me to guide the group towards deadlines and how fast we should go or how slow we should go and then he had those status reports that he had those different colored things if things are on track not on track"*
Output	*"He presented us with a timeline"* *"those weekly status reports were quite helpful because sometimes you think you know my group is doing amazing. But then you see a few red dots and orange dots and you're like Oh yeah."*
Judgement	*"He was very organized so that was much more enjoyable."* *"I can remember in one of the first few meetings...He pointed out the fact of the importance of communication and he suggests a few ways to remember. He was influential at first. So it was beneficial actually."*

Challenges

Expectations of the role (project manager/leader vs project management consultant)	*"I mean the project managers need to know what the project is. They need to understand it better because otherwise they can't lead a project."* *"They were thinking that I'm doing their assignment …"*
Timing	*"Our schedules didn't really match …"* *"His project ended earlier ...His reports deadlines were different…"*
Mutual commitment	*"When I asked them to meet and they were like No we are okay we'll be able to do it."* *"I asked them how frequently you want to meet. So they were like, never."* *"I think my project manager just made it up ... because during the process. I never saw him."*

To answer the research question: How the proposed authentic assessment enhances student learning and engagement?

By creating an opportunity for students to

- Work on Real projects with real people
- Learn by doing (communication, time management, risk management ..)
- Learn by teaching

Findings also indicate that all assessments involved must address the following in the design and execution: mutual commitment, synchronized timeframe, and Assumption management

Research contribution: The case descriptions show how the proposed assessment was are used in action

Limitations

More project management students volunteered to participate in focus groups/exit interviews.

Participants were likely to be amongst more engaged and responsive students.

Future Direction

We are trying to enhance relevant assessments to address some of those challenges identified.

We would like to use this model to include additional disciplines in collaborative projects.

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Questions?